



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

February 22, 2023

**HB 770
Publicly Funded Full-Day Prekindergarten Program –
Tier I Child - Alteration of Definition**

House Ways & Means Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 770. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state’s second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 770 would expand the definition of a “Tier I Child” for the purposes of the Maryland prekindergarten expansion passed in 2020 as part of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. Current law defines a “Tier I Child” as one who is three or four years old and whose family income is less than 300% of the federal poverty level.

House Bill 770 would expand this priority grouping to include children with a disability, children who are homeless, and children who are from homes in which English is not the primary spoken language. As Tier I Children are not charged any family share for access to publicly funded prekindergarten, the aforementioned three categories of traditionally disadvantaged youth would be eligible for that benefit.

Nonpublic school prekindergarten providers have received mixed- delivery prekindergarten expansion grant sites in the first round of expansion in 2022, winning competitive grant bids for programs to provide prekindergarten to four-year-old children whose family income is 300% of the federal poverty level (FPL) or lower. Nonpublic providers have the capacity to offer high quality seats at our programs and are enthused to continue to partner with the state of Maryland in advancing the educational vision of the Kirwan Commission through mixed-delivery prekindergarten expansions.

As the Conference supports that expansion, and routinely advocates for state policy to aid our most vulnerable Marylanders, namely those who are homeless, disabled or from immigrant communities, we support this legislation. We request that this committee issue a favorable report for House Bill 770.